

**Amendments to the Claims:**

Please cancel claims 1-20 without prejudice. Please add new claims 21-40 as shown below. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1-20. (Canceled)

21. (New) A system for managing a plurality of virtual storage volumes available to a user for use in storage and retrieval of user data, the system comprising:  
a pool linked to at least one of the plurality of virtual storage volumes; and  
a controller for automatically allocating a storage device to the pool.

22. (New) The system of claim 21 wherein the storage device comprises at least one physical disk.

23. (New) The system of claim 21 wherein the storage device comprises at least one redundant array of independent disks.

24. (New) The system of claim 23 wherein the storage device comprises at least one virtual storage volume.

25. (New) The system of claim 24 wherein the at least one virtual storage volume comprises at least one virtual disk.

26. (New) A method for managing a plurality of virtual storage volumes available to a user for use in storage and retrieval of user data, the method comprising:  
automatically allocating a storage device to a pool and linking at least one of the plurality of virtual storage volumes to the pool.

27. (New) The method of claim 26 wherein the storage device comprises at least one physical disk.

28. (New) The method of claim 26 wherein the storage device comprises at least one redundant array of independent disks.

29. (New) The method of claim 28 wherein the storage device comprises at least one virtual storage volume.

30. (New) The method of claim 29 wherein the at least one virtual storage volume comprises at least one virtual disk.

31. (New) A virtual volume management system comprising:  
a plurality of virtual storage volumes available to a user for use in storage and retrieval of user data;  
a storage pool linked to at least one of the plurality of virtual storage volumes;  
and  
a controller for automatically allocating a storage device to the pool.

32. (New) The system of claim 31 wherein the storage device comprises at least one physical disk.

33. (New) The system of claim 31 wherein the storage device comprises at least one redundant array of independent disks.

34. (New) The system of claim 33 wherein the storage device comprises at least one virtual storage volume.

35. (New) The system of claim 34 wherein the at least one virtual storage volume comprises at least one virtual disk.

36. (New) A virtual volume management method comprising:  
providing a plurality of virtual storage volumes available to a user for use in  
storage and retrieval of user data; and  
automatically allocating a storage device to a storage pool and linking at least  
one of the plurality of virtual storage volumes to the pool.

37. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the storage device comprises at  
least one physical disk.

38. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the storage device comprises at  
least one redundant array of independent disks.

39. (New) The method of claim 38 wherein the storage device comprises at  
least one virtual storage volume.

40. (New) The method of claim 39 wherein the at least one virtual storage  
volume comprises at least one virtual disk.